

# How We Are Called to Live Captive to the Lord

Paul, the great apostle and the man who wrote most of the New Testament, lived a life of devastating hardship and disastrous trials. And yet Paul determined to live a life of unmatched purpose and holy identity. Let's lean in and listen to the heart and words of Paul as they avalanche through the centuries.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

Paul makes a major pronouncement in this verse that is easy to overlook as we slide into his instructions. As I read Paul's declaration, my heart stops beating, and I am forced to evaluate my own life.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord."

Paul doesn't recognize that he is being held captive by the Roman government; instead, he clearly states that if he is held hostage by anyone, he is certainly being held by the Lord.

As I contemplate Paul's words, I am forced to recognize the fact that we are all in prison to something or to someone. There are invisible chains that bind all of us to something in this mortal life. Some people are in bondage to their families, to shopping, to their careers, to entertainment or to eating. Some are enslaved to politics, to opinion or to sports. Your prison is the one thing in life that holds you in its vice-like grip. It's a sobering thought, is it not?

What prison do you need to be released from? Conversely, in what prison should you be spending time?

Paul was in dire need of being released from the Roman prison that held him, but this was not possible with mere human efforts. Paul chose to rise above his human chains and determined to be chained to a more powerful and real prison than any earthly confinement. Paul lived in a prison of absolute freedom!

Paul knew that although the Roman prison might have the power to impede his earthly movement, in being chained to Christ Jesus, he was set free to be the person who he was eternally called to be. Paul experienced more freedom in prison than he had when walking the streets of Rome or Jerusalem. Paul lived for the prison of serving Christ wholeheartedly all the days of his life.

Paul was assured of one overriding blessing from living a Christian life: if you are free in Christ, there is no prison that can hold you back from your destiny!

This is a conundrum, isn't it? What a lovely and hopeful contradiction in terms! My prison frees me to serve Christ with my whole heart.

I hope these words are resonating with those of you who are young mothers or fathers. Although your days may include piles of laundry, disrupted sleep and nonstop demands, you have the joy of serving with amazing freedom during these years. Sing the Word of God over your children and tell them the stories of Jesus at the breakfast table. When there is chaos in your home, choose to be a man or a woman at glorious peace.

I hope these words are resonating with those of you who are widowed or single. Although your days might be restricted by loneliness and lack of purpose, you have the freedom of serving the Lord with uninterrupted prayer, with hours to volunteer at your church and to invite people into your home.

In this season where you have been gifted with excess hours yet denied intimate human companionship, choose to be a person of glorious purpose.

I hope these words are resonating with those of you who are empty nesters or retired. Although your life might be hampered by the call of haunting memories and wondering if you will ever do anything significant again, you now have the freedom to travel, to develop new hobbies and to mentor others. In this season of transition and loss of purpose, choose to be someone with a glorious identity.

We can all choose, like Paul, to be a miraculously liberated prisoner and to determine that our lives matter for the unshakable kingdom even during the most difficult days of life. {eoa}

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